



2014 Sapphire Celebration

**Given by Mark B. Rosenberg
on Nov 01, 2014**



*This speech was presented to attendees of the Sapphire Celebration
on November 1, 2014.*

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for joining us for our 2nd Sapphire Celebration. At this time I would like to take a few minutes to pay tribute to those who have helped us reach our milestone achievements.

First, Dr. Herbert Wertheim, for whom our college is named. Dr. Wertheim has changed millions of lives through his discoveries, innovations, and contributions in eye care and other scientific fields. As an FIU trustee, he stepped up to Light a Torch. You see, he was the one to first propose the creation of a medical school at FIU, and helped secure approval for our medical school and led the way in establishing it. And did he ever lead the way. Then, he gave us the largest cash gift in FIU history, to help us educate doctors for many generations to come. He has supported us, nurtured us, and inspired us. HE believed in us before we believed in us! Thank you Dr. Wertheim for your steadfast commitment to FIU. Thank you Vanessa for being with us here tonight!

I would also like to recognize Benjamín León Jr. Benjamín León also made a landmark gift to our college, to establish the Benjamín León, Jr. Family Center for Geriatric Research and Education, and the Leon Medical Centers Eminent Scholars Chair in Geriatrics. We are proud of the partnership we have forged with Leon Medical Centers. This partnership is helping us educate doctors who now have first-hand experience working with older people. Benjamín Leon is a pioneer in meeting the health care needs of a culturally diverse elder population. Thank you, Mr. Leon and thanks to your family for your commitment to our College of Medicine.

And I also want to give a special thanks to the Green Family and the Green Family Foundation. The Green Family Foundation already has had a major impact on our institution, an endowed arts lecture series, and our Steven and Dorothea Green Library. In our medical school, they have funded the Green Family Foundation NeighborhoodHELP program. We look forward to continuing this groundbreaking partnership that is uplifting our community. Thank you to the Green family, Steven and Dorothea, Kimberly, and the Green Family Foundation for helping us heal our community.

I also would like to thank the tireless members of the Sapphire Celebration committee that made this evening possible. And I would like to give a special thanks to the committee co-chairs, Fran Berrin, Alyse Messinger, Kerry Perez and Debbie Tano. Thank you for working so hard to make the dreams of our students a reality.

Tonight we are also here to celebrate our trailblazing medical school. Here are some facts you need to know:

- Late stage breast cancer is out of control in low-income neighborhoods in our community. Mortality because of this is very high, much higher than state and national averages.
- The incidence of AIDs in our community is one of the highest in the US.
- There is an urgent need for proactive care for adults with autism. Yet, there are few if any serious programs to address this need in Miami Dade and Broward County.

At our Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine, we get this! Here is the principle that we were built on. That, like our university, the College of Medicine will take responsibility for our community! If we don't, who will?

Do you know that:

- It was with the help of many of the people in this room today, that in March 2006, the Board of Governors approved the creation of the first public medical school in South Florida. We will never forget the blood, sweat and tears that made this medical school possible. Yes, we turned the impossible into the inevitable! And then in 2009, when we opened our doors to the first class, we knew we were a part of something big. That first White Coat ceremony was one of the most incredible moments that I had at FIU in forty years!
- Our success is based on our innovative curriculum. A curriculum that helps educate not just great physicians, but community leaders who think holistically, globally and locally.
- We have joined forces with some of South Florida's top specialists and providers at leading hospital affiliates. We want to thank you for believing in us! FIU Health, is now a gateway for coordinated access to world-class care. This includes clinics such as the Faculty Group Practice at our Modesto A. Maidique Campus and one at the Broward Health Medical Center. We also are building an Ambulatory Care Center, in partnership with Miami Children's Hospital. This center will house South Florida's first dedicated pediatric ambulatory surgical center.
- We will continue to make an impact by keeping our promise to be a medical school for our community.
- We take responsibility through our geriatric research and education initiatives with the Leon Medical Center. We take responsibility through our neighborhood health initiatives sponsored by The Green Family and the Batchelor Foundation.
- We take responsibility for improving AID's related education and sharing it with more households throughout impacted communities.
- We take responsibility for improving care for adults with autism and other neurodevelopmental disorders through a new program called EMBRACE.
- Now we can take action on the breast cancer challenge! We recently received a \$1.1 million gift from the Braman Family Foundation with matching support from the Batchelor Foundation. This allows HWCOM to offer state-of-the-art

screenings at its Linda Fenner 3D Mobile Mammography Center. The first of its kind in South Florida, 3D mammography detects more instances of breast cancer with fewer “false alarms” than standard or digital mammograms alone.

These are just some of the ways our medical school is breaking barriers for the good of our community. These are just some of the ways that we take responsibility for our community at FIU!

Now, it’s true that we live and work in a world of contrast. Mayhem is everywhere. Dark weapons and grim acts of violence are drivers of discourse, and social media from the local to the global. Yet, here we are, believing that it is important to keep hope alive for so many that desire to pursue a medical degree. Working with some of the most determined and appreciative medical students anywhere. Maybe it has looked too easy! Realize this, working with you we have built this medical school from the ground up! From the ground up built by you, me and countless others. Here, in Tallahassee, now scattered around the globe. With a common hope and belief that this medical school would make a difference in the lives of people.

So lets have a frank talk about money. The funds to help medical students get their educations, achieve their dreams. We refuse to shut the door of opportunity to eligible students because of the accident of their zip code of residence, race, ethnicity or because their parents did not earn a university degree. That is especially true of our medical students. The average medical student debt at FIU for the graduating class of 2014 is \$199,000. But because we embrace the radical idea that we take responsibility, this gives us an opportunity to help.

You see we too have weapons. The weapon of clarity about helping our students! The weapon of generosity for hopeful students deserving of the best medical education available, through FIU. With these two bright weapons, we can keep hope and opportunity alive for countless thousands and we will be better for it!

Tonight you can leave a legacy of caring and helping to close the gaps in health care, and access to medical education that ought to be in this 21st century. Our privilege and well-being gives us an opportunity to help so many others less well off. A bright future for our community demands nothing less!

Ladies and Gentlemen, you helped to build this house from the ground up! Lets continue to reach for the stars by helping our students with the scholarship support they and our community deserve!

Tonight, help us make a difference! Thank you!